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CLAIMS

1. A method of establishing network communication later in time between a first endpoint entity accessing a resource over a network and a second endpoint entity associated with that resource, using a service system that can set up a communication session with an associated transport mechanism allowing the exchange of data across the network between endpoint entities joined to the session; the method involving the steps of:

(a) - upon the first endpoint entity indicating that it wishes to communicate with a second endpoint entity in the future, the service system generates and stores a session identifier for a communication session to be used in the future and passes a copy of the identifier over the network to the first endpoint entity; and

(b) - the first endpoint entity subsequently passes back the session identifier to the service system which on matching the received identifier with the stored session identifier, joins the first endpoint entity into a communication session with the second endpoint entity.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein the first endpoint entity indicates that it wishes to communicate with a second endpoint entity in the future by a communication sent outside of any existing communication session, the first endpoint entity passing the service system context data about the intended communication session which the service system stores in association with the session identifier it generates for the session, this context data comprising data that is subsequently used by the service system to select a particular second endpoint entity, from a pool of possible such entities, to join in a communication session with the first endpoint entity.

3. A method according to claim 1, wherein the first endpoint entity indicates that it wishes to communicate with a second endpoint entity in the future by a communication sent outside of any existing communication session, the first endpoint entity passing the service system context data about the intended communication session which the service system stores in association with the session identifier it generates for the session, this context data identifying a specific second endpoint entity with which the first endpoint entity wishes to communicate and being used to set a time for the intended communication session based

on the availability of that second endpoint entity, this time being passed back to the first endpoint entity in step (a).

4. A method according to claim 1, wherein the first endpoint entity indicates that it wishes
5 to communicate with a second endpoint entity in the future during the course of an existing
communication session with a second endpoint entity, the service system extracting data it
has about the existing communication session and storing it as context data for the intended
communication session in association with the session identifier it generates for that
session, this context data identifying the second endpoint entity whereby the same second
10 endpoint entity is joined with the first endpoint entity in the future communication session
as in the existing session.

5. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the service system is
15 triggered to select, where not already specifically identified, a second endpoint entity and to
join the second endpoint entity with the intended communication session, by the first
endpoint entity sending the session identifier to the service system in step (b).

6. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein a telephone number associated
20 with the first endpoint entity and a time for the future communication between the first and
second endpoint entities is stored at the service system along with the session identifier,
the service system being triggered at the indicated time to initiate a telephone call to the
first endpoint entity.

25 7. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein a time for the future
communication between the first and second endpoint entities is stored at the service
system along with the session identifier, the service system being triggered at the indicated
time to select, where not already specifically identified, a second endpoint entity and to join
that second entity into the intended communication session.

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8. A method according to claim 7, wherein a telephone number associated with the first
endpoint entity is stored at the service system along with the session identifier, the service

system upon joining the second endpoint entity to the communication session, initiating a telephone call to the first endpoint entity from the joined second entity.

9. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the network resource is a website and in step (a) the first endpoint entity is passed said session identifier in association with a rendezvous web page the URI of which is bookmarked by the first endpoint entity, the first endpoint entity returning the session identifier to the service system instep (b) by using the bookmarked URI to request the rendezvous web page.

10. A method according to claim 9, wherein the session identifier is passed to the first endpoint entity in a cookie associated with the rendezvous web page, this cookie being automatically stored at the first endpoint entity.

11. A method according to claim 9, wherein the session identifier is passed to the first endpoint entity in a query string of the URI of the rendezvous web page.

12. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the network resource is a commercial website, the first endpoint entity being associated with an enquirer and the second endpoint entity is associated with a representative in a contact center.

13. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the service system, in setting up a communication session for the first and second endpoint entities, creates a service-session functional entity which in the course of joining a said endpoint entity to the session, sends connection details of the transport mechanism associated with the communication session to the endpoint entity or its proxy, that endpoint entity or its proxy then using the connection details to connect itself to the transport mechanism.

14. A method according to claim 13, wherein the service-session functional entity comprises a session instance with generic behaviour for adding and removing endpoint entities to the communication session and for recording the endpoint entities currently joined to the communication session, and an associated service instance with service-

specific behaviour determining when the session instance is to add and remove endpoint entities.

15. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 12, wherein the service system, in
5 setting up a communication session for the first and second entities, creates a service-
session functional entity that comprises a session instance with generic behaviour for
adding and removing endpoint entities to the communication session and for recording the
endpoint entities currently joined to the communication session, and an associated service
instance with service-specific behaviour determining when the session instance is to add
10 and remove endpoint entities.

16. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the transport
mechanism associated with a communication session provides multiple data transfer
channels, for different media types, between endpoint systems joined to the communication
15 session.

17. A method according to claim 16, wherein the endpoint systems include web browser
functionality and the service system provides functionality, and the transport mechanism
provides channels, for at least two of the following:

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- text chat ;
 - follow-me page-push;
 - packetized voice.

18. A method according to claim 13, wherein the transport mechanism associated with a
25 communication session provides multiple data transfer channels, for different media types,
between endpoint systems joined to the communication session, the connection details
passed to a said endpoint system or its proxy comprising details of the media channels
associated with the communication session, and the endpoint system or its proxy using
these details to establish corresponding media channel connections to the transport
30 mechanism.

19. A method according to claim 13, wherein the state of connection of a said endpoint entity to the transport mechanism is signalled to the session-service functional entity by leg messages passed between a leg controller of the endpoint system or its proxy and a corresponding leg controller of the service-session functional entity.

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20. A method according to claim 13, wherein the second endpoint entity or its proxy already has connection functionality for joining and participating in a communication session, the service-session functional entity of the communication session to which the endpoint entity is to be joined inviting this entity into the session by sending said connection details to the connection functionality of the entity or its proxy.

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21. A method according to claim 13, wherein the service-session functional entity, in joining the first endpoint entity into the communication session, sends the latter both connection functionality for joining and participating in a communication session, and said connection details.

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22. A method according to claim 21, wherein the connection details and functionality are sent in association with a web page served by the service system.

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23. A method according to any one of claims 13 to 15, wherein the service-session entity is created at the time the session identifier is sent to the first entity.

24. A method according to any one of claims 13 to 15, wherein the service-session entity is created immediately prior to the joining of a first-to-be joined one of the first and second entities is joined to the session.

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25. Apparatus comprising:

- a network resource which is accessible to a first endpoint entity over a network;
- session means for setting up a communication session with an associated transport mechanism allowing the exchange of data across the network between endpoint entities joined to the session;

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- future-communication identifier means responsive to the first endpoint entity indicating that it wishes to communicate in the future with a second endpoint entity associated with said network resource, to generate and store a session identifier for a communication session to be used in the future;
- 5 - pass-back means for passing a copy of the identifier over the network back to the first endpoint entity;
- session-activation means for subsequently receiving back the session identifier from the first endpoint system, matching it with the stored session identifier, and where such a match is established, triggering the session means to join the first endpoint
- 10 entity into a communication session with the second endpoint entity.

26. Apparatus according to claim 25, wherein the apparatus is adapted to enable the first endpoint entity to indicate that it wishes to communicate with a second endpoint entity in the future by a communication to the apparatus made outside of any existing

15 communication session; the future-communication identifier means being operative to store, in association with the session identifier, context data concerning the first endpoint entity; and the session means being operative, when triggered by the session-activation means, to use this context data to select a particular second endpoint entity, from a pool of possible such entities, to join in a communication session with the first endpoint entity.

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27. Apparatus according to claim 25, wherein the apparatus is adapted to enable the first endpoint entity to indicate that it wishes to communicate with a second endpoint entity in the future by a communication made outside of any existing communication session; the future-communication identifier means being operative to store, in association with the

25 session identifier, context data identifying a specific second endpoint entity with which the first endpoint entity wishes to communicate, this context data and being used to set a time for the intended communication session based on the availability of that second endpoint entity; and the pass-back means being operative to pass back this time to the first endpoint entity in association with the session identifier.

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28. Apparatus according to claim 25, wherein the apparatus is adapted to enable the first endpoint entity to indicate that it wishes to communicate with a second endpoint entity in

the future during the course of an existing communication session with a second endpoint entity; the future-communication identifier means being operative to store, in association with the session identifier, context data about the existing communication session comprising at least the identity of the second endpoint entity; the session means being
5 operative, when triggered by the session-activation means, to use the context data to join the same second endpoint entity with the first endpoint entity in a communication session.

29. Apparatus according to claim 25, wherein the network resource is a website and the pass-back means is operative to pass the first endpoint entity said session identifier in
10 association with a rendezvous web page the URI of which is intended to be bookmarked by the first endpoint entity, the association of the session identifier with the rendezvous page being such that the first endpoint entity can return the session identifier to the service system by using the bookmarked URI to request the rendezvous web page.